RULES FOR HEARING THE Word of God

With certain and saving Benefit.

The Second Edition.

By *DANIEL BURGESS*, Minister of the Gospel.

Published by an Hearer of them, at the Request of many others.

London, Printed for *Andrew Bell* and *Jonas Luntley*, at the Pestle and Mortar, over against the Horse-shoe-Tavern in *Chancery-Lane*. MDCXCIII.

Price Three Pence.

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Rules for hearing the Word of God, with certain saving Benefit.

BEFORE you Hear.

Direction I. *Pray for a Blessing.* Ask and you shall receive it. Sincere hearty Prayer is still a Prevailer; and then *most*, when it is for Gifts that be *best*. But by not asking a *Blessing*, you deserve a *Curse*: because you do virtually tell God, either that you *need not* his Spirit, or that you *desire not* the saving Efficacy of his Word. Neglect of Prayer will ruine the *best* Hearer; holy Use of it will save the *worst* Hearer.

Direct. II. *Use Forecast against Distractions in Hearing.* Wrath, and

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Luſt, and ſinful Paſſions will take away your Heart at Sermons; but a conſtant cordial *Watch* and *Fight* againſt them, will deſtroy thoſe Deſtroyers. God will let no Soul be devoured by them, that is diligent to keep from them: Though on the other hand, Souls that do little to *prevent* them, ſhall be *plagued* with them. Divine *Grace* will not encourage your ſinful *Negligence*: No, but the Temptations which overtake you *wilfully*, ſhall overcome you *wofully*. Believe ſad Experience, others and your own.

Direct. III. *Value the Word, and the Preaching of it, and thank God for them both.* Honour them for *God's* ſake, and God will honour and bleſs you for his *Son's* ſake, and for his *Promiſe* ſake: God is ſo free of his Bleſſing on both, that he lets no Man who highly prizeth it, go without it. You may highly prize *Gold* and *Silver*, and go without them: but the *richer Treaſure* of the Goſpel is certainly your own, if you can but *ſupremely* value it. If you do

deſpiſe

deſpiſe it, blame your ſelves that you are not enriched by it. God will not throw his ineſtimable *Pearl* unto ungrateful *Swine*: Swine that will not give ſo much as *Thanks* for the *Pearl* of greateſt Price.

Direct. IV. *Acquaint your ſelves well with the Ends and Uſes of the Word.* Read *Books*, and ask *Miniſters*, and know as well as they, to what Purpoſes God ſendeth his Oracles: The four comprehenſive Ends are, to *convince* of Sin, to *convert* unto Jeſus Chriſt, to *confirm* in Grace, to *direct* and *comfort* in Obedience: Underſtand theſe, and muſe much on them. Come to Sermons for theſe, and you ſhall not go from Sermons without them: But *God hath not Pleaſure in Fools*: and if you come to hear for you know not what, it's no marvel if you come away Fools as you went.

Direct. V. *Never forget God's Promiſe of Bleſſing on dutiful Hearing.* He cannot lie; and he has told you, *Hear*

and your Souls ſhall live. Keep you that Promiſe of his as the Apple of your Eye. It will do your Heart good to think, God hath not left himſelf at Liberty to *bleſs* or not *bleſs* your Hearing: No, but that his FREE Grace is alſo BOUND Grace; bound by *Word* and *Oath*. This will give you *holy Boldneſs*, to which God always giveth *happy Welcome*. But the want of this in your Mind, will keep it full of *curſed* and *malignant* Doubts and Fears. Without a Miracle of Grace it will hold you *fearful*, and hold you *unbelieving*; that is, periſhing.

Direct. VI. *Honourably uſe your Advocates.* All the Week long honour the *Son* of God, as he in whom alone you can ever have *Acceptance* with God: and honour the *holy Spirit* of God, by whom alone you can ever have effectual *Aſſiſtance* to any Good. No Man ever thus honoured the *Son* and *Spirit*, and went without the full Bleſſing of the *Word*. Without our Interceſſor in Heaven, and our Interceſſor in our Hearts, we can *profitably* do nothing; but with them

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we may do every thing *prosperously*: Therefore be Sermons every-where so lost, because this Dependance on Christ and on his Spirit are scarce any where found. O that this Word might be well weighed!

Direct. VII. *Conclude upon it, the Word will be the Savour of Life or Death unto you.* It will *cure* you, or further *kill* you; and give *Life to Life*, or *Death to Death*. Give your selves this *preparatory Sermon* before you come to hear *mine*. Ministers Sermons *soften* or *harden* Hearers Souls; they never leave you (in degrees of Good or Evil) as they find you. Such Fore-thoughts are ordinary *Antecedents*, and direct *Causes* of no small Good.

IN Hearing the Word.

Direction I. *Approve Plainness and Power.* Not only *excuse* and *endure*, but *approve* and *prefer* them. You like

like beſt the Phyſician that *heals* beſt; and the Counſellor at Law that *beſt brings you to Peace, and quiet Poſſeſſion of your Inheritance*; tho neither of them do *complement* you at all, but *reprove* you much, and chaſtiſe your miſchievous Folly with needful Severity. Be as wiſe for your Souls as for your Bodies and Eſtates. God heals the ſick Souls that prefer and uſe his own preſcribed plain Medicines: But nice and peeviſh Ones, that loath his *Manna*, and muſt have *Quails*; that diſguſt his *ſharp Word*, and muſt be treated with Mens *ſmooth Words*; ſuch muſt die in their Pride and Folly. Where Preachers be but *Muſicians*, Churches be but *Golgotha*'s.

Direct. II. *Receive the faithful Miniſter's VVords as God's own:* for ſo they are; they are God's Words *originally*; his Sermon as well as his Text, is all of it ſo. They are God's Words *materially*, as to the Matter and Senſe of them. They are God's Words to you *inſtitutively*; by God's Command they be ſpo-

ken

ken unto you. They are God's Words given *advantageously*; Words of God, by the Kindneſs of God, delivered with more Advantage for your Minds and Hearts than in the *Holy Scripture* barely read: Words of God, with a *Comment of his Appointment*: Words of God, to which he hath made a *ſpecial Promiſe* of higheſt Bleſſing: for *Faith* (eminently) *comes by hearing* theſe Words: *He that heareth you, heareth me*, ſaid Chriſt to the Preachers that he ſent. Receive every Goſpel-Sermon as by Chriſt *preached*, and doubt not but it ſhall be by Chriſt *bleſs'd*: But if you take the *Words* as well as the *Breath* of a Sermon, for *ours*, the Miſtake will be a deadly Loſs of *yours*.

Direct. III. *Mix abundance of Prayer with your Hearing.* Souls are Spirits, their Motions are ſwifter than the Sun's; they *can*, and they *ought* to do two things at once: *Ejaculation* helps *Attention*, and not hinders it: Bread and Salt muſt be in every Meal, and ſhort warm Prayer in every Duty. Let

your Hearts cry out at every *Truth* delivered, *O Lord, fix this Truth on my Soul!* At every *Precept* and *Promise*, *Good God, help me to obey this Command, and to rely on this Promise!* At every *Reproof*, *Glorious Spirit, convince and humble me for this Sin, and lead me to Christ for Pardon*, &c. Such *praying Hearers* never lose their *Labours*. But wo to them, who tho at Sermon-time they be not *deaf Adders*, yet they be *dumb Dogs*, whose *Hearts* do not to this Purpose speak, while their *Ears* hear. I do not *well hearken* to the Ambassador, when I *pray* not *much* to the King.

Direct. IV. *Apply to your own Souls what the Preacher saith to all.* To know *for one's good*, the Hebrews call to know *for one's self*: And do not all the World so do? Ministers be *Nurses*, Sermons be *Breasts*, God's Word is *Milk*, Hearers be the *Children*, and right Hearing is their *sucking* the Milk into each one's own Soul. What another *sucks* and applies, will not *nourish* thee. Say thou then of every *Doctrine*, *This is my Les-*

son,

ſon, I will learn it: Of every *Command, This is my Duty, I will do it*: Of every *Promiſe, This is my Encouragement, and I will make Meat and Drink of it; my Soul ſhall rely and feed hereon.* Who ever miſſed of Life by the Word of Life, that ſo took it to themſelves? Who did ever thus *ſuck*, and not *grow* by the Goſpel's Milk? Bleſſed are they that thus *monopolize* a Sermon: While, to be ſure, all are *ſtarved* that do not thus *feed*, whatever Dainties are ſet before them. And they are the moſt *miſerable of all the Damned*, who ſtarve themſelves where *they might have feaſted.*

Direct. V. *Expreſs your Reverence of God in a Sermon, unto all the Congregation.* God is ſpecially preſent in *Heaven*, and at a *Sermon*: Do you believe it? Then ſhow that Faith of yours: Shew it to your God, and to your Conſcience, by holy *Thoughts* and holy *Affections*: Yea, and ſhew it to all the Church by your *well-compoſed Countenances*, and *becoming Geſtures.* Your *Bodies* are God's as well as your *Souls*:

If you do not glorify him *with both*, you glorify him *with neither*. God lays no hard Impoſitions on *Aged, Sickly, Weak* Bodies: But he requires others to give him *reverent Poſtures*. Heads *unneceſſarily* covered in Hearing, are *ſinfully* covered, and *ſcandalouſly*. *Gadding Eyes* are impudent Publiſhers of profane *rambling Hearts*; and of thoſe Fools, whereof *one makes many*. Put off your Shoes, and keep them off while you are on holy Ground: That is, *be Reverent in Soul and Body*. So honour God before all the People, and then he ſhall make it ſeen before all the People, how he honoureth and bleſſeth you. Irreverence at a *Sermon*, is a publick Call to God for *Damnation*: A conſtructive bidding God to damn you, where Hundreds may be *Witneſſes* to it; and, without God's great Grace, be *poiſoned* by it. [There are who ſay, that all Diſſenters are irreverent in Worſhip: See you that they ſlander us not with a matter of Truth.]

Direct. VI. *Honour the Preacher as a*

Man

Man of God, and no more. God ſtiles a Miniſter by that Name; and God's Names be the moſt proper and inſtructive. A Miniſter is *but a Man*; do not therefore *adore* him as a God. Let him be ſo thy *Miniſter*, that Chriſt may ſtill be thy only ſupreme *Shepherd and Biſhop*. He is *but a Man*; expect therefore and bear with his *Infirmities*, and pray God for his *Aſſiſtances* to him. He is *but a Man*; therefore pin not thy Faith on his Sleeve, but exerciſe thy *own Senſe*, and beg the Guidance of God's *holy Spirit*. Yet nevertheleſs, he is *a Man of God*, remember: If not, do not *hear* him: If ſo, conſider while thou art hearing, he is *one that hath received the Holy Ghoſt*; he is *one that Chriſt hath qualified and commiſſioned, under himſelf, to be a Saviour of thee*, and of all that hear him. Wherefore do not *deſpiſe* him, as not *adore* him. Thou ſhalt profit by him, if thou heareſt him as he is, an *Embaſſador of God*, a *Meſſenger of Chriſt*, an *Overſeer made by the Holy Ghoſt*. But wo is thine, if thou followeſt him either as *a God*, or as *a com-*

mon Man. The Goſpel pronounceth no Bleſſing upon the *Superſtitious*, or upon the *Profane*.

Direct. VII. *Project to retain as much as may be of what you hear.* All along your *hearing*, deſign and do what you can for *remembring*. Say over to your ſelves the *Doctrine* many times: and, if you can, repeat to your ſelves all the *Heads* of the Diſcourſe: But lay faſt hold of the *main Drift* of every Sermon. However *Nature*, *Sickneſs* or *Age* may have incurably wounded your Memories, God is gracious, remember. He will accept an *unfeigned Good-will* for the very *Deed*. His Spirit ſhall be *a never-failing Remembrancer*, to ſuch as againſt their *Wills*, and againſt their *Endeavours*, be forgetful. He will not call them *forgetful Hearers*, that ſtrain and ſtrive, and do their beſt to be *tenacious* ones. But he will ſo *call*, and will *curſe* thoſe, who *like not and liſt not* to retain his Word, as well as to receive it. Hearers *ſo wilfully dull*, muſt look to *remain among the Dead*. As they are *ſlothful*, they

they are *wicked* Servants. And let them expect Christ's foretold Word, *Depart ye Curſed.* Heaven is no Hive for *Drones.* Ignorance is a *Curſe*; and if it be your *Choice*, it will as ſurely be your Deſtruction as your Option.

AFTER Hearing God's Word.

DIrection I. *Take the moſt earneſt heed that you do not let ſlip what you have received.* Your Memories be the *great Servants* of your Faith, Hope and Obedience; and they are but *imperfectly ſanctified*: they be too much like the Grates that let go *clean Water*, and hold *filthy Mud.* If you take *little Pains* about them, you will have but *ſorry Service* from them. The beſt Ground will never hold the *good Seed*, if no care be had to drive off the *Fowls* that will be coming and catching it away, and if Labour be not beſtown to harrow it in. This Labour *for the Word* is Labour *in the Lord*; and it ſhall *not be in vain.*

Thus

Thus do, you ſhall ſurely proſper, and do well. But if this be too much in your Conceits; if you are *lame*, and will not uſe *Crutches*; if you cannot otherwiſe *remember*, and you will not *talk* with your ſelves and Families of a Sermon; nor go forth unto a *Repetition*; nor *ask the holy Spirit* to be your Remembrancer; you muſt take to your *Sorrow*, what you get by your *Sloth*. The *Devil* cannot rob you of a Sermon *againſt your Will*: and *God* will not keep a Sermon in your Mind *without your Will*.

Direct. II. *Let your Thanks be returned after every Sermon heard.* Thanks and Praiſe are God's *dearly beloved*; the *End of all his Works*; of your *Beings*, your *Redemption*, your *Goſpel-Calls*, all *Ordinances* and *Providences*. It is *Hell* where *no* Praiſe and Thanks are; and it is *Heaven* where there is *nothing beſides*. Nothing delighteth God ſo much as theſe; and for nothing on this Earth doth God expect theſe, more than for his *Goſpel preached*. When it is ſaid,

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He giveth his Word, 'tis presently added, *Praise ye the Lord.* And *this* Praise we are told, *shall please the Lord better than an Ox or Bullock*, than any external Sacrifice. If *Unprofitableness* by the Word do not drive away *Thankfulness*, *Thankfulness* for the Word shall be sure to drive away *Unprofitableness*. Let your Thanks be more than *verbal*, your Profit shall be *real*: It shall *appear to all Men*. But as long as you *hear unthankfully*, you must *be* and *appear unholy*. Ingratitude doth, of any Sin to be named, turn Honey into Gall, and Physick to Poison. It is the same thing, to call a Man *unthankful*, and to say he is *a Samaritan, and hath a Devil.*

Direct. III. *Lament your Sins in hearing, and go act Faith on Christ for your Pardon.* Abundance of *Dross* is in all our *Gold*. Iniquity abounds in our *holy Things*. The holiest of them all need a *thousand Pardons*, and deserve our *deepest Blushes*. And let us not flatter our selves, *Repenting and Believing be not Things indifferent*, or Acts of *meer Chri-*

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than Liberty, but *indiſpenſable Duty*. They muſt go before the Seal of our Pardon, in our *Conſcience* or in *Heaven*. And believe it; God is incenſed with Sin, *whoever* it be that ſinneth, and in *whatever*. He delighteth to be *kind*, but he hateth to be *fond*. As ever you would profit by a Sermon, follow it with the *Tears of Repentance*, and with the *Prayers of Faith*. Then will God give you Profit, *with Meaſure preſſed down and running over*. If you are too *proud* for this; in God's Name I tell you, that Pride of yours ſhall have a ſhameful Fall. The beſt thing *proud*, is worſe than the worſt that is truly *humble*.

Direct. IV. *Examine with humble Diligence, what in hearing appeared to you as doubtful*. Suſpect *your own Underſtandings* more than your *Miniſter's*: But lean not *raſhly* on your own, or *idolatrouſly* on his. If Error be in *his Doctrine*, it turns to Poiſon in *thy Soul*. Wherefore do not *ſwallow* what thou doſt *ſuſpect*. The moſt *noble Hearers*

try

try all Doctrine by the *holy Scriptures*. Good *Children* ask their *Parents* Advice; wife *Women* ask their *Husbands*; the Wise of *all Sorts* go ask their *Ministers*, and intreat them to clear up by God's *written Word* the Truth of their *preached Word*. Thus do; and whoever be *barren* Hearers, you shall be *fruitful* ones. God never fails to teach Souls so careful to imbibe nothing but Truth. O happy Church where *Mal.* 2. 7. is wisely and duly observed! where *Ministers Lips* preserve Knowledg, and *People seek it* at their Mouths. But it is no more than is to be expected, if stupid *Drones* and contentious *Cavillers*, live *Idiots*, and die without *saving Wisdom*. God's Curse rests on the Idle, and he resisteth the Proud.

Direct. V. *Prove your State and Condition by every Gospel-Sermon.* You cannot try *too often*, things whereof you can never be *sufficiently* certain: I mean so much certain, but that you will still need to be more certain. You are *true Believers and alive to God*, or *Unbelie-*

vers and dead in Sin and Miſery. You are *ſtrong* in the Grace that is in Chriſt, or *Babes weak* in the ſame. It is a ſorry Sermon by which no Help is given you, to form a Judgment of your ſelves touching theſe things. God's *Bleſſing* upon your *conſcientious Care* to make uſe of the Help, you need not to diſtruſt. His *Command* on you to prove your ſelves, is not without a *Promiſe* of Bleſſing made to it. He ever enricheth thoſe Hearers, who uſe Sermons as *Scales* to weigh, and *Touchſtones* to try their Souls. But as for the *Preſumptuous*, who dream themſelves to be as good as they need to be; and the *Deſpairing*, who conclude that they ſhall remedileſly abide as bad as they are, and therefore never put the Word of God ſo cloſe unto them; What Hope of theſe! God will *condemn* thoſe by his Word, who will not *judg* themſelves by it. If you will not make it a *Light* unto you, he will make it *Fire* to you.

Direct. VI. *Carry on your Knowledg, Memory,*

Memory, and every good Purpoſe, unto Practice. Chriſtian Divinity is an Art of doing more than *knowing* God's Will, *remembring* it, and *temporarily purpoſing* to do it: It teacheth *living unto* God. Word and Sacraments, yea Faith and Repentance, all are for Obedience. God gave his *Son*, and ſent down his *Spirit*, to get him a People zealous of good Works as well as Words. Much *Fruit* it is (and not your *fair Leaves*) that glorifieth God. And it is the Hearer, *rich in good VVorks*, that God will *glorify*. The Hearer, to whoſe *Feet* the Word is a Light, to walk by it; as well as a Light to his *Head*, to talk by it. I have Warrant from our Saviour to tell you; If you hear his Word and ſo keep it, you ſhall have greater Honour than the Virgin *Mary* had in being his Mother. And do you but ſtill *do* the Word of his that you *know*, you ſhall never fail to be *made know* the Word that he would have you to *do*. Uſe well your *Hands* and *Feet*, and he will make every Sermon a Royal Salve to your *Eyes*. But from

him that practiſeth not what he knows, from him ſhall be taken the Light that he hath: To him is promiſed no more Light; unto him is threatned the darkeſt Fire, *Luke* 28. 29. *Heathen Moraliſts* hold no Man to be ſo very bad, as he who *acts* Evil, and no more than *talks* of Good. *Chriſtian ones* muſt needs pronounce them the worſt Monſters, that ſpeak as with *cloven Tongues*, and yet, as *Negroes*, are no where white but in the *Mouth*.

Direct. VII. *Teach your Relations what God teacheth you at Sermons.* God will never *forfeit* his Name of *Love*; nor fail to *reward* Charity, and ſpecially *Soul-Charity*. It is the Devil's Proverb, *The Free ſhall not be fat.* God's Proverb is, *The liberal Soul ſhall be made fat, and he that waters others ſhall be watered.* God will hide nothing from an *Abraham*, for this very reaſon, becauſe he will inſtruct all his *Family* with it. Go you now and inſtruct yours; ſo ſhall you be taught of God as you have never been in paſt Days: *Drop* Divine Truths

Truths on them, and God ſhall make Sermons *rain down rich Showers* on you. But vain are your idle Moans, while you are uncharitable to your Relations. If I know the Mind of God, *He will ſtarve you if you will not feed them. God is a great lover of Children; and our Children are his more than ours. Nor can you eaſily incenſe God more, than by neglect of theſe his Children.* I wonder not that many *hear and underſtand not*; becauſe *what they underſtand, they teach not.* You may be *ever learning*, but you ſhall *never come to the ſaving Knowledg of the Truth*, until you make conſcience of communicating the Truth you know. Thus, *ſpend*, and *God will ſend.* Teach *others*, and God ſhall teach *you*; comfort *them*, and God ſhall increaſe and multiply Comfort to *you.*

When theſe Rules ſhall be obſerved, *Miniſters* ſhall be joyful (both) *Fathers* and *Nurſes:* The *Bed of Chriſt* ſhall be *green* in our Aſſemblies. It ſhall be no more querulouſly ſaid, that our *Ser-*

mons

wombs have *miscarrying Wombs* and *dry Breasts*. Joy shall be made *in Heaven*, and in the *midst of us*. *Fear shall come on every Soul of our Scorners*. We shall *praise God* as the Primitive Christians, and have *Favour with all the People*. The Word of God shall *so run and be glorified*; and God, even *our own God shall so bless* us. *Amen*.

FINIS.

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